THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) No. Soft drinks in 250 ml. and 300 ml. bottles are not considered close to each other and hence the difference between them is not difficult to differentiate.

Competition faced by CIL

1772. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that, Indonesian and Australian companies have already out-priced Coal India Ltd. in the global market and it now faces grim prospect of severe competition at home;

(b) if so, the reasons thereof;

(c) whether the steel plants forced to cut cost of production, are now increasingly switching over to imported coal because of its low ash content; and

(d) if so, what steps are being taken by Coal India Ltd. to contain this situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) Indian coal is being exported only to neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. India is not a major exporter of coal. In the domestic market indigenous coal producing companies will face competition from imported coal as well as falling coal prices in international market.

(c) Existing supply of coking coal from indigenous sources is not adequate to meet the full demand of steel plants. Imports of low ash coking coal is also being resorted to for blending with indigenous coking coal for quality improvement.

(d) A committee consisting of Technical Experts from Ministries of Coal and Steel was constituted, which has recommeded steps to be taken for progressive reduction of imports of coking coal.

These recommendations inter-alia include setting up of new washeries, carrying out modifications to existing washeries, augmenting production of coking coal from existing and new mines and making available better quality coking coals from Assam and Meghalaya. Private entrepreneurs are also to be encouraged to set up washeries to supplement the supplies.

Coal exclusively for public sector

1773. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to Industrial policy statement of July 1991, coal is exclusively for public sector;

(b) whether it is also a fact that coal production has increased from 77.22 MT in 1973 to 238 MT in 1993;

(c) whether the policy statement is a factor which prohibits participation of the private enterprise in this sector; and

(d) if so, whether Government propose to review its approach in this matter and if so, when?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) Yes Sir.

(c) and (d) Government have since amended Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973 w.e.f. 9.6.1993. The Act as of now, allows private sector participation in coal mining operations for captive consumption for power generation, production of iron & Steel, washery operations and other end uses that may be notified by the Government.

Funds provided to BCCL for education

1774. SHRI RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) how much funds are being provided to the management of BCCL in the educitaon account by Government; and